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| The Skills and Practice of Information Literacy in a Grade 3 class |
| Action Research for SUNY COETAIL Course 2 |
| (1198 words) |
| **Nerine Chalmers** |
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| A study to investigate the skills and practice of Information Literacy in a Grade 3 class during a Unit of Inquiry, where the central idea was Past Civilizations are linked to societies and cultures of the present day and the trans-disciplinary theme “Where we are in place and time”. |

1. Description of initial situation

The aim of this study is to investigate the skills and practice of Information Literacy (IL) in a Grade 3 class during a Unit of Inquiry, where the central idea was *Past Civilizations are linked to societies and cultures of the present day* and the trans-disciplinary theme “Where we are in place and time”. The study took place after the completion of the unit.

2. Objective of research

The objective of the research was to interview teachers and students in order to determine the skill level in IL of targeted students, and to investigate its practice. This research constitutes a preliminary investigation, with the intention of identifying areas to be considered in the future.

3. Identification and explanation of relevant 21st Century Literacies

Both the Qatar Academy 21st Century Learning document, and the ISTE NETS incorporate Research and Information Fluency and Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making. The over-arching theme of these areas is IL.

4. What do we know about this already?

There is plentiful research on the role of IL in the 21st century. In his analysis of Year 8 Students’ Reflections on IL Skills and Techniques, Herring, having considered the definition of an information literate student of Herring and Tarter (2007)[[1]](#footnote-2), defines IL as a way of thinking, with an emphasis on students’ reflecting on their information searching, their use of information and their ability to transfer these skills. This is relevant to the concepts and essential skills of the Primary Years Program (PYP).

In another research paper, James Herring and Judi Hurst (2006) found that the students in their study did not necessarily transfer IL skills from one year to another, or from one subject to another.

In line with 21st century skills, Peter Godwin in his blog [*Information Literacy meets Library 2.0*](http://infolitlib20.blogspot.com/2010/03/informatin-literacy-20-hype-or.html)quotes from Sonja Spiranec and Mihaela Banek Zorica who write that we should "encourage students to stop seeing research/assignments as a process of collecting information and instead to see them in terms of forming their own perspectives and creating new insights.” This broadens considerably the scope of an IL definition.

5. Research Referencing and intended methodology

For this research, I interviewed the classroom teacher, the TIF and a group of students from a Grade 3 class.

6. Research Report (Use Action Research)

The TIF commented that the focus in these lessons was on note-making and note-taking. The students were given two pre-selected web sites, and two books. After the initial lessons, students were able to read the text, and pick out key words with relative ease.

Once students had found the relevant sections, they wrote information down, and later created their own paragraph. Those who copied the information word for word, found it more difficult to write their own paragraph than those who had written notes from memory.

One of the requirements of the summative assessment was that the students should make connections between the world of the ancient civilization they were studying and their own world. The TIFs reported that students found this aspect difficult. The teacher said that the students had found the concept of historical time difficult.

The classroom teacher indicated that the students had three dedicated lessons with the TIFS. The TIFS worked from a customized search engine, and set texts. After these lessons, the students used books of their own choice, and the pre-selected websites. Students had the option of using graphic organizers and scaffolding sheets provided by the TIFs. Many students had difficulty selecting the texts to use. In addition they had a sheet of prepared questions which helped guide their research.

Two previous units this year had involved research. Neither the TIF nor the teacher found signs of skill transference. The teacher felt that it would be helpful to begin the IL lessons at the start of the year, with the first unit, and build on them throughout the year.

The students were asked how they went about their inquiry. In all cases, their focus was more on the product than the process. They all said that the first thing they did was to think about what they would need for the living museum presentation. All the students interviewed said that they found it easier to find information from books than from the internet. Four students were interviewed. One said that he wrote his own questions – based on what, where, when, why, how – as directed by the teacher. One said that she followed set headings given by the teacher, and two said they wrote down the information they found in the books. They used the index to locate the information, and one said that she was confused when trying to decide on the information that was important, and what to use. One student said that she found pictures useful, and was able to glean information from them.

In terms of the affective domain, all four students enjoyed the experience. “I felt that I was experimenting with something new. I love history. I felt good all the time that I was working on the Living Museum.” “I felt proud.” “I enjoyed it because so many people came to listen.”

The students did not feel that in terms of information-seeking there had been any connection with previous units of inquiry. However they did make connections in other ways – with the unit “Me as a learner” where they had looked at Multiple intelligences, and discovered their “Smarts” which they found useful, and one boy who had studied war fare in Ancient Greece made a connection to the unit “Trading Places” as he said that if a country did not have sufficient food, it could lead to war.

7. Reporting of Knowledge Outcome and reflection. What did we learn and what questions does this raise for next time?

It appeared from the student responses that the search for information was secondary to the product which was sharing their knowledge at the Living Museum. It would be interesting to see what would happen if part of the assessment for this unit shifted from the product to the process. Although none of the students specifically mentioned the lessons on note-taking and note-making, all were confident that they had found the information they needed. The students felt that the books they used had all the necessary information. The fact that none of them found the internet useful could have reflected the difficulty of finding language-appropriate sites. One of the boys said that he had used Wikipedia, but had not found any information.

This narrow research cannot lead to any definitive conclusions, but it does point to other research areas. Herring’s comments on reflection, and on IL being a way of thinking as opposed to a process or model, fit very well with the PYP philosophy, and future research could investigate the link between the PYP inquiry cycle, and the IL skills and techniques set out by Herring and Tarter. The question of skill transference from one unit or grade level to another would also be a useful research area, as would be the role that IL plays, or could play, in trans-disciplinary themes, within a consideration of the current role of IL across the primary school.

Works Cited

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**Appendix 1 - Questions posed to students, teacher and technology integration facilitator (TIF):**

**The following research questions were posed to the students:**

How did you go about your inquiry?

What was your central idea, and how did you choose your topic for the living museum?

How did you go about finding information? Can you describe what you did, and how you found the information?

How did you prepare for the living museum?

Was there anything that you had done in a previous unit of inquiry, either in Grade 3, or in earlier years, that helped you with your inquiry?

Is there anything that you learnt in the course of this unit that you know will be helpful to you in another unit? Can you explain what that was?

How did you feel as you were working on this inquiry?

Did you reflect on it afterwards? Can you remember what you thought?

**The following research questions were posed to the teacher and TIF:**

Can you identify areas in the research aspect of this unit of inquiry that the students found easy, and those with which they struggled?

Can you comment on the methods they used to find information for their living museum?

Were you aware of their building on any skills that they had acquired in previous units or previous years?

What would you change in leading this unit in the future?

**Information Literacy Definition**

Herring and Tarter (2007)[[2]](#footnote-3) argue that an information literate student is one who is able to:

identify the purpose of information and ideas being sought

identify relevant and authoritative sources (electronic, print, human) of information and ideas

read/view/listen to, understand and learn from such sources by evaluating the contents of such sources in relation to their purpose

use the information and ideas found in the sources to produce curriculum related work (written or oral) in school and to extend their own learning of a concept or topic

reflect on their ability to identify a purpose for and creative use of information and ideas both within the school and elsewhere

transfer information skills across subjects and year levels in the school

transfer relevant information skills from school to further/higher education and to the workplace learn and adapt to new information skills required in many workplace settings. (p. 4)

1. Herring, J., & Tarter, A.-M. (2007). Progress in developing information literacy in a secondary school using the PLUS model. *School Libraries in View*, *23*, 3-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Herring, J., & Tarter, A.-M. (2007). Progress in developing information literacy in a secondary school using the PLUS model. *School Libraries in View*, *23*, 3-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)